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MADE NEW: A New Unityⁱ Ephesians 4:1-16

INTRODUCTION:

We do want to say a special welcome to those of you that are guests with us this morning. We are so glad that you are here. My name is Chris Wigley, I'm one of the pastors here at Trinity. If you are a guest, we'd love to get to connect with. You can provide information to us by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a form that is less 30 seconds to fill out. When you click "submit," it notifies me, and I always look forward to following up with our guests each week.

If text messaging isn't your thing, please swing by our information center located in the fellowship area, right out these doors in the lobby. We have a gift there for you just as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. Again, we are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

JEFF JULIAN APPRECIATION:

Before we jump into our study this morning, I want to celebrate something with you. A milestone for one of our staff members. I want to ask Pastor Jeff Julian to join me up on stage for just a moment.

This past week, on July 12, Pastor Jeff Julian celebrated 25 years of service at our church! Can we just celebrate that together and let Pastor Jeff know how much we appreciate him?

Over the past 4 and a half years, I have had to privilege to serve alongside Pastor Jeff, and I can honestly say that he is not only a colleague, but I can call him a friend. Pastor Jeff has served our church faithfully, through many ups and downs, and has been a vehicle by which many have been discipled. His bride, Tonda, has been a perfect example of a Pastor's wife. I am so very grateful for he and his family.

The bible, in Romans 13, says to give honor to whom honor is due. So, today, we honor you, Pastor Jeff. And as a token of appreciation, and in honor of your tenure here at Trinity, on behalf of our church, I present you with this certificate. It is a voucher with Teri's Treasure and Travel for you and Tonda to use toward

a vacation. It has an expiration date to ensure that you actually utilize this voucher.

You know, I can attest to the fact that, since I've been here, Pastor Jeff has not used all his allotted vacation days in a given year. It is our prayer that you and Tonda enjoy a vacation knowing how grateful this church is for you guys. I love you, Brother! Can we show our appreciation for Pastor Jeff one more time?

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in the middle of a teaching series we have entitled Made New. We are studying the New Testament book of Ephesians this Summer. And got our title for our series from one of the major themes that Paul teaches about; being made new in Christ. We've looked at how we have a new identity, a new focus, a new life in Jesus, that we belong to a new body of believers, and that we discover a new plan in Christ, and that we pray with a new expectation. Today we are going to look at the fact that we have a new unity.

So, I want to invite you to grab your bibles and turn with me to chapter 4 in the book of Ephesians. We are going to work our way through verses 1-16 today.

You know, one of the things that I love about what The Lord is doing at Trinity is that He is bringing an increasingly diverse people to our church. We come from a variety of backgrounds, life experiences, and even various locations. And yet with all the diversity, we are being brought together under the leadership of The Lord Jesus. Our church is experiencing the new unity that Paul is talking about in Ephesians 4.

BACKGROUND:

Here in this chapter, Paul is turning the page, so to speak. As is common in most of Paul's writings, he spends time laying a foundation and then turns the page from that foundation to building upon the foundation. This is a shift in talking about doctrinal matters and then turning the page to practical matters.

Up to this point Paul has been talking about the theology surrounding the fact that we are in Christ. He's repeated that phrase so many times. Now he is going to answer the question of how being in Christ affects the way we live. He is going from principle to practice, from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. How is this truth lived out in our lives?

Now, I want to point out what I would say is the main idea of verses 1 through 16. The theme verse is verse 3. You follow along in your copy of God's Word.

"3<u>Eager</u> to <u>maintain the unity</u> of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Paul says that this new life in Christ is to produce in us an eagerness to maintain unity.

We are going to talk through the 3 ways Paul urges us to maintain unity. But before we get to those, I want to point out a couple things about this theme verse, verse 3. First is the word "eager." In the original language, this word means to be diligent or to make every effort. The idea is that we are to strive for and work hard to maintain unity.

We understand that relationships take work. Developing and maintaining relationships does not automatically happen, it requires intentionality. Paul is saying that we need to, as a church, work hard to protect and maintain unity.

The second thing that I want to point out is the fact that Paul is NOT saying that we need to create unity. He says that we are to, "maintain the unity," that has already been created. We cannot create the kind of unity that is found in belonging to the church. Look at the world today. We can't be unified on anything. Our unity is one that is established in the person and work of Jesus.

Paul has already talked to us, in chapter 2, about the fact that Jesus has torn down the walls that separate us and, by that, unified us into one family, God's family. Our role is not to create unity, that has already been done. Our job is to maintain, protect, the unity that has already been created.

ILLUSTRATION: Hand Analogyiii

Think about your hand for just a moment. You and I didn't have to put our hand together. We don't wake up each morning and fashion our hands together so that we can write. We don't have to create a hand in order to throw or hit a baseball. We don't create unity in our hand so as to make it useful. It has already been created.

Now, it is our responsibility to maintain the unity of our hand. In other words, when we were all chopping up branches and tress that fell in the storm a couple weeks ago, we had to make every effort, practice responsibility, so that we didn't cut off a finger or our hand with a chainsaw. That would disrupt the unity in our hands. We didn't create the unity in our hand, but we have the responsibility to not disrupt the unity created in our hands. Make sense?

So, how do we maintain unity in our fellowship? I believe Paul gives us 3 ways to maintain unity. We are to show respect toward one another, seek unity not uniformity, and we are to strive for maturity. In doing these things, we can take responsibility to maintain the new unity that we in Christ.

MESSAGE:

So, with that background, let's look at the first way Paul urges us. He asks us to...

1) Show Respect.

Let's look together at verses 1 through 3. 1 therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the <u>calling</u> to which you have been <u>called</u>, 2 with all <u>humility</u> and <u>gentleness</u>, with <u>patience</u>, <u>bearing with one</u> <u>another</u> in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of <u>peace</u>.

We are to walk in a way worthy of the calling we have received. In other words, we are respond to God's call. What have we been called to? I think we tend to understand the word "calling" more as those who have been called to the ministry. But remember, Paul is not talking to just the pastors here. He's talking to believers. So, calling here has to do with the responsibility of every Christian not just for those in "professional ministry." So we are to all live this out.

I read a commentator this week that said it this way. "If God's love is so great, if His salvation is so powerful, if God has granted such reconciliation, then believers should live accordingly. [We] should value God's love enough to be shaped by it." When we are shaped by it, we walk worthy to the calling placed on our lives. That is reflected in the respect we show toward one another.

Paul uses words to describe how we are to show respect. Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and peace. Let's talk about these for just a moment. Humility means a lowliness of pride, or a sense of modesty. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:13, he boils down the Christian life to three main aspects. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. And love, in this context, is written in light of the divisions that were in the Corinthian Church. In other words, we demonstrate love for others by practicing humility and seeking their interest above our own.

This is counter intuitive to our culture, isn't it? We are taught to get ahead, look out for number one, win at all costs, and to elevate self above others. But

Christianity, at every turn, breaks down this view. Now, certainly we are not urged to let others take advantage of us, and we are to work hard, and that hard work pays off, but the Christian life is one lived in community, not isolation. How much easier would it be to be unified if we all practiced humility? If we all looked to others' interest above our own? It makes sense, right?

Gentleness carries the same ideas as meekness here. VII To be meek is to demonstrate power under restraint. It conveys a certain level of sensitivity toward others which displays that we value them in such a way that we desire not to harm them. We are to be humble and gentle in our respect of others.

Patience means to set aside our own agendas. Viii Our culture has taught us to expect something now. Waiting on something just isn't in our understanding. But for the Christian it should be. In terms of our relationships, showing patience is giving others room and time to learn, grow, and develop. We work to maintain unity when we give others room to grow at a different pace.

Next, Paul says to bear with one another. It means to endure or to tolerate one another. This means to hold in check our self-centeredness instead of insisting on my rights. We are all, at times, a little much. We can all be a pain in the neck. We would do well to remember that in maintaining the unity we have in Christ.

When we put all these things in practice, we live in unity, in the bond of peace with one another. So, we are to maintain our unity by showing respect for one another. Secondly, we are to...

2) Seek unity, not uniformity.

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Church is the unity within the diversity. I want us to read verses 4-12. And when we read through this, I want you to take notice of something. Notice how Paul talks about what we all have in common, where we are the same, and then notice what Paul says about how we are different. Read along with me.

⁴There is <u>one body</u> and <u>one Spirit</u>—just as you were called to the <u>one hope</u> that belongs to your call— ⁵<u>one Lord</u>, <u>one faith</u>, <u>one baptism</u>, ⁶<u>one God</u> and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [Those are the beliefs and identity that we all share in common. Verse 7.] ⁷<u>But</u> [Transition word. That is to say that we have all those things in common BUT here is where we differ.

But] grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [That is that Jesus stepped out of Heaven and came to earth in His incarnation and then ascended after His resurrection.] ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [those are gifts] ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Did you see the similarities and differences?

Very practically speaking, the way we maintain unity despite our differences is that we major on the majors, we don't major on the minors. I have known churches, for example, to have a major falling out and split because of the color of the carpet. That is majoring on the minors. We must instead always seek to major on the majors.

Paul says that there are doctrinal truths that we are be the same on, that's verses 4 through 6. But we celebrate our differences in our giftings so long as they align to the scriptures, that's verses 7 through 12. We are the same in what we share in one body of Christ, one Holy Spirit, one hope in Christ, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God. That's doctrine. But we differ in the gifts we have. In other words, not everyone is an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist, or a shepherd or a teacher. But some are. We are not all the same, and that's a great thing.

So, we maintain unity by showing respect for one another and then we seek unity, not uniformity. Thirdly, we...

3) Strive for Maturity.

There is an overarching purpose behind the unity within the diversity of the church. That purpose is to help us grow. Let's read verses 13 through 16.

¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood [That is a person that is an adult]^x, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

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¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it **builds itself up** in love.

What Paul is saying here is that God has brought together this group of people called the church. They are in the same in doctrine but different in gifting. And the reason why we all have differing gifts is because we all have a part to play. And when you utilize your giftings, and when I utilize my giftings, we edify one another. He says that when every part of the body of Christ is working properly. it is built up. That is, it grows, it matures.

I think we have a tendency to place greater value on specific gifts in the church. For example, you might think, I'm not a good teacher. I can't really contribute. That is a lie. You might think, I'm not an evangelist, I can't share the gospel. That is a lie as well. And if we buy into the lie that some giftings are greater than others, or the lie that we can't really contribute to the kingdom, then we allow the enemy to win and forfeit the opportunity to grow and mature in Christ.

Scripture teaches in multiple places that if we have come to faith in Jesus, we are given spiritual gifts. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes spiritual giftings. Because of that, we are all gifted in some way to serve in God's Kingdom. While Paul just mentions a few giftings here in chapter 4, he is NOT saying that if you don't have one of these gifts that you are not useful to the kingdom. No! We all have a role and a responsibility to exercise those gifts. Your gifting, Beloved, is vitally important.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:14-18, ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If you are in Christ, you are gifted and expected to utilize that gifting.

And Paul tells us why it is so vital that we utilize our giftings in the church. Look again at verse 14. 14so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

I'm afraid that the Church, I'm talking about the Church as a whole, not just Trinity. I'm afraid that the Church has not adequately exercised its gifts, and we are now seeing the impact that has had on discipleship in the Church. Paul says that we need to be mature or else we are going to be tossed around by every type of belief system.

You know, all around us we see signs that demonstrate some believers have compromised biblical truth and turned to cultural ideologies. In those cases, believers have given way to what Paul says is human cunning and the craftiness of the devil's schemes. What we need in our day and time, are believers unified together, exercising our spiritual giftings, so that we can be built up, in order to stand firm on the truths of God's Word. We cannot allow ourselves to be tossed to and fro by the waves of sinful culture. In a world where it is easy to give way to political correctness, we need biblical resolve.

We must be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We do that by showing respect to one another, seeking unity not uniformity, and striving for maturity.

CONCLUSION:

As Micah and our worship team comes to lead us in a time of response, my question for us to how do you need to respond?

Maybe for some of you, you'd say, "Pastor, I don't know if I have committed my life to Christ. I don't know that I am in God's Family." If that's you, we would love to talk with you this morning about how you can trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. We will have our elders at the front ready to receive you this morning.

Maybe you are here, and you would say that you are not utilizing your spiritual gifting. You are being convicted on the need to serve the church. We have ways for you to get plugged in.

Maybe others of you have a prayer need. You are in need of the Church to surround you and lift you up in what you are walking through. You come this morning. We would love to pray with you and over you. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, "The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians," Moody Press: Chicago, 1986; Klyne Snodgrass, "The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians," Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Andrew T. Lincoln, "Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians," Word Books: Dallas, 1990; Vance Pitman, "A United Church (parts 1 & 2)," sermons preached at Hope Church Las Vegas on March 10, and 17, 2019, accessed online: https://hopechurchlv.com/message_passages/ephesians/page/3/. Jack Graham, "Much More: We're In This Together," sermon preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church on March 22, 2020, accessed online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyS7ikl_tGl; Michael Youssef, "Discover Your Treasure House: Discover Its Unifying Power," published by Leading The Way, April 21, 2013, accessed online: https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/discover-your-treasure-house/part-5; Michael Gossett, "Ephesians Living in Christ: Grow in Christ," sermon preached at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, TX, March 6, 2022, accessed online; https://www.gabc.org/episode/grow-in-christ; Tony Lawson, January Bible Study: Ephesians 4:1-16; Chip Ingram "Answering The Call: How to Discover and Fulfill God's Purpose for Your Life," published by Living on the Edge, accessed online: https://messagenotes.livingontheedge.org/Answering-The-Call-01-What-Has-God-Called-You-To-Do.pdf; Skip Heitzig, "A Worthy Walk or a Wimpy Walk?," message taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque, August 25, 2004, accessed online: https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/237/sermon/3098; Jonathan Pokluda, "A

ii Strong's Concordance, 4704, Spoudazó.

https://www.watermark.org/message/2054-team-sports.

iii Adapted from illustrations used by Michael Gossett and J.D. Greear.

Team Sport," message preached at Watermark Church, May 16, 2012, accessed online:

- iv Pointed out by Klyne Snodgrass, page 196.
- v Ibid.
- vi Strong's Concordance, 5012, Tapeinophrosune.
- vii HELPS Word-Studies, https://biblehub.com/greek/4240.htm.
- viii Snodgrass, 219.
- ix Strong's Concordance, 430, anechó.
- x Strong's Concordance, 435, anér.